<u>Amendments to the Claims:</u>

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1   1.   (currently amended)   A method, comprising:

2   restricting access, by a locking element, to a restricted-access

3   space defined within an enclosure;

4   counting a number of trigger events during ~~one or more~~ successive

5   time intervals, each time interval having a predetermined duration,

6   wherein the number of trigger events counted during a given time

7   interval can be greater than one; and

8   associating the number of trigger events counted in each time

9   interval with one digit of a digit sequence representing a code being

10   submitted to actuate the locking element and gain access to the

11   restricted-access space<u>, wherein each digit of the digit sequence</u>

12   <u>corresponds to the number of trigger events counted during one of the</u>

13   <u>successive time intervals and can have a value greater than one</u>; and

14   determining whether the code represented by the digit sequence

15   actuates the locking element to gain access to the restricted-access

16   space.

1   2.   (previously presented)   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   detecting the trigger events during each time interval based on a

3   sequence of signal interruptions caused by the trigger events;

4   representing at least part of the sequence of signal interruptions as

5   a sequence of digital logic levels;

6   comparing the sequence of digital logic levels with a previously-

7   entered code to ascertain an equivalence there between; and

8   based on ascertaining the equivalence, actuating the locking

9   element to gain access to the restricted-access space.

1   3.   (Original)   The method of claim 2, further comprising:

2   based on ascertaining the equivalence, identifying a user

3   authorized to access the restricted-access space.

1   4.   (previously presented)   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   generating an audible signal indicative of at least part of the digit

3   sequence.

1   5.   (previously presented)   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   identifying an operating mode based at least partly on a portion of

3   the digit sequence, the operating mode corresponding to at least one of a

4   code change request and an access request.

1   6.   (Original)   The method of claim 5, further comprising:

2   generating an audible signal indicative of the identified operating

3   mode.

1   7.   (previously presented)   The method of claim 1, wherein the trigger

2   events correspond to manipulations of a door handle.

1   8.   (previously presented)   The method of claim 2, wherein the sequence of

2   signal interruptions correspond to interruptions in an optical signal.

1   9.   (original)   The method of claim 1, wherein the locking element

2   corresponds to a solenoid in a lock.

1   10.   (original)   The method of claim 1, wherein the enclosure corresponds to

2   at least one of an automobile, a boat, an airplane, a building, a

3   container, and a cabinet.

1 11. (currently amended) A method, comprising:

2   counting a number of trigger events associated with a user

3 interface during one or more successive time intervals, each time interval

4 having a predetermined duration, wherein the number of trigger events

5 counted during a given time interval can be greater than one, the user

6 interface affecting at least one operation of a vehicle;

7   associating the number of trigger events counted in each time

8 interval with one digit of a digit sequence representing a code being

9 submitted to actuate the locking element and gain access to the

10 restricted-access space, wherein each digit of the digit sequence

11 corresponds to the number of trigger events counted during one of the

12 successive time intervals and can have a value greater than one;

13   comparing at least a portion of the digit sequence with a

14 previously-stored code; and

15   based on the comparison, performing the at least one operation of

16 the vehicle.

1 12. (previously presented)   The method of claim 11, further comprising:

2   generating a human-perceptible signal indicative of the digit

3 sequence.

1 13. (previously presented)   The method of claim 11, wherein the user

2 interface corresponds to a door handle of the vehicle and the trigger

3 events correspond to manipulations of the door handle.

1 14. (Original)   The method of claim 13, wherein the at least one operation

2 of the vehicle corresponds to at least one of a manipulation of a locking

3 element restricting access to at least part of the vehicle, a manipulation

4 of a window of the vehicle, and an ignition of the vehicle.

1   15.   (previously presented)   The method of claim 11, wherein the sequence of

2   digits corresponds to interruptions in an optical signal and the compared

3   indicia correspond to a sequence of digital logic levels.

1   16.   (Original)   The method of claim 11, wherein the at least one operation

2   of the vehicle corresponds to at least one of a manipulation of a locking

3   element restricting access to at least a part of the vehicle, a manipulation

4   of a window of the vehicle, and an ignition of the vehicle.

1   17.   (currently amended)   A system, comprising:

2   a locking element restricting access to a restricted-access space

3   defined within an enclosure;

4   a trigger-detection element detecting a number of trigger events

5   during one-or-more successive time intervals, each time interval having a

6   predetermined duration, wherein the number of trigger events detected

7   during a given time interval can be greater than one; and

8   a control element receiving indicia associated with the trigger

9   events detected by the trigger-detection element, associating the number

10   of trigger events detected in each time interval with one digit of a digit

11   sequence representing a code, wherein each digit of the digit sequence

12   corresponds to the number of trigger events counted during one of the

13   successive time intervals and can have a value greater than one, and

14   actuating the locking element to provide access to the restricted-access

15   space in response to the code.

1   18.   (previously presented)   The system of claim 17, further comprising:

2   a feedback element generating a human-perceptible signal

3   indicative of at least part of the digit sequence.

1   19.   (Original)   The system of claim 17, wherein the locking element

2   corresponds to a solenoid in a lock.

1   20.   (Original)   The system of claim 17, wherein the enclosure corresponds

2   to at least one of an automobile, a boat, an airplane, a building, a

3   container, and a cabinet.

1   21.   (previously presented)   The system of claim 17, wherein the trigger-

2   detection element includes a signal emitter and a signal detector, the

3   signal detector detecting a sequence of signal interruptions in an optical

4   signal transmitted by the signal emitter.

1   22.   (Original)   The system of claim 21, wherein the optical signal exhibits

2   an infrared wavelength.

1   23.   (Original)   The system of claim 21, wherein the signal detector

2   transmits the indicia associated with the sequence of signal interruptions

3   to the control element.

1   24.   (Original)   The system of claim 23, wherein the indicia associated with

2   the sequence of signal interruptions corresponds to a sequence of digital

3   logic levels.

1   25.   (currently amended)   The system of claim 17, wherein the control

2   element compares the ~~the~~ digit sequence with a predetermined code to

3   determine whether to actuate the locking element.

1   26.   (previously presented)   The system of claim 17, wherein the control

2   element identifies an operating mode based at least partly on a portion of

3   the digit sequence, the operating mode corresponding to at least one of a

4   code change request and an access request.